Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

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July 2025 Newsletter May 12, 2025

Introducing Colossians: Christ, Cosmos, and the Challenge of Empire This summer, our sermons will explore the Letter to the Colossians. Colossians tells the story of Christ's wisdom, power, and sufficiency. It was meant to warn against a certain "philosphy" that was opposed to Christ, and to provide a properly grounded alternative.

A Letter with Questions: Who Wrote Colossians?

The question of authorship remains one of the most debated issues in New Testament scholarship today. On one hand, Colossians identifies Paul as the author, and many scholars accept this at face value. On the other hand, differences in vocabulary, style, and theological emphasis have led others to argue that the letter was written by a disciple of Paul, perhaps a generation later. This uncertainty shouldn't unsettle us. Pseudonymity, writing in the name of a revered teacher, was a common and accepted practice in the ancient world, especially in philosophical and religious circles. It wasn't necessarily seen as deceptive; instead, it was a way to extend the teaching of a respected authority into a new context.

If Paul did compose Colossians during his lifetime, it was likely near the end of his ministry, possibly during his imprisonment in Rome in the early 60s CE (cf. Col 4:3, 10, 18). In such a situation, Paul may have dictated general themes and entrusted a trusted assistant, perhaps Timothy or another companion, to develop and write the letter in his name. If written after Paul's death, the letter would likely have been composed as early as possible, perhaps in the late 60s or early 70s, by someone shaped by Paul's theology, seeking to interpret and apply his vision to a new generation of Jesus-followers.

To Whom Was It Written?

Even the destination of the letter is a matter of debate. Colossians is addressed to the church in Colossae, a small city in the Lycus Valley of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). But here's the complication: there's little evidence outside of this letter for a Christian community in Colossae. Compounding the mystery, an earthquake devastated the region in the 60s CE. Some scholars suggest that the letter was intended for neighboring communities in Laodicea or Hierapolis, which are referenced in Colossians 4:13 and 16. Perhaps Colossae is named in the address to lend apostolic legitimacy or to soften any perceived criticism aimed at the actual audience.

Regardless of the precise destination, the concerns of the letter are clear. A new "philosophy" is unsettling the community. Whether this teaching came from within or outside the community is uncertain. What we do know is that it appears to mix elements of Jewish law, ascetic practice, and mystical spirituality. The author responds not by dissecting the alternative teaching point by point, but by offering a grand and compelling alternative: the vision of the Cosmic Christ.

Christ Is Enough: A Theology of Sufficiency

In a world saturated with gods, spirits, and divine mediators, each offering protection, wisdom, or spiritual power, Colossians insists that Christ alone is sufficient for spiritual liberation and fullness of life. There's no need to seek out additional rituals or celestial intermediaries, no need

to observe strict purity laws or cosmic calendars. Everything needed for fullness (Greek: *pleroma*) is found in Christ (Col 2:9-10).

This message is anchored in Colossians 1:15-20. Scholars often identify this as a pre-existing liturgical fragment, possibly already in use in worship before the letter was written. It serves as the letter's grounding story or myth, used here in a technical sense, meaning a foundational narrative that gives meaning and coherence to a community's beliefs and practices. In this hymn, Christ is portrayed as the image of the invisible God, the one through whom and for whom all things were created. Christ is before all things and holds all things together. He is the head of the body, the church, and the firstborn from the dead. In him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him, God reconciled all things, on earth and in heaven, making peace through the cross.

This cosmic vision has ritual and ethical implications. Colossians goes on to describe baptism as a participation in Christ's death and resurrection (2:12), and calls believers to put to death the old self and clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, and love (3:1-17). Worship practices, communal ethics, and household relationships are all reoriented in light of Christ's cosmic lordship.

A Challenge to the Empire

Finally, we must not overlook the letter's subtle but powerful critique of imperial ideology. In the Roman world, Caesar was referred to as "Lord," "Savior," and even "the image of God." His rule was said to bring peace (Latin: *pax Romana*), often through violence and domination. Colossians

appropriates this imperial language and applies it to Jesus, crucified by the empire, yet raised by

God to reign over all creation. To declare that Christ holds all things together, that he has made peace through the cross, and that every principality and power is subject to him (2:15) is to challenge the authority and pretensions of Rome. Colossians, like other early Christian texts, reimagines power and peace not as military conquest but as selfgiving love and reconciliation.

As we journey through Colossians in the weeks ahead, we'll see how this letter speaks to our own context of competing voices, anxious striving, and fragmented loyalties. In a world that constantly tells us we need more, Colossians proclaims that Christ is enough. He is the image of God and the source of a new humanity grounded in love and peace.

Council Meeting Minutes

Attendees Present - Pastor Matt Converse, Joe Freiburger, Maelynn Fries, Linda Grawcock, Morgan Heidenreich, Branson Heidenreich, Bill Owen, Mark Krider

Absent- Deena Hart, Paul Marken, Sarah Pearl

Meeting was called to order at 6:33 pm by President Joe Freiburger

Beth Moss attended the meeting and discussed her role as Parish Nurse (Faith Community Nursing). Beth is a registered RN, and she was the Parish Nurse with her previous church down in Ft. Myers Fl. She will be able to check blood pressure, do home visitation and give communion, offer and pray with the individual and go to doctor visits with someone to offer support. We all thanked Beth for taking on this role.

Pastor led devotions and we covered The Creed as found on Pg, 1162 in the hymnal. This is all part of the small Catechism that was written by Martin Luther in German so it could be used at home. At that time all scripture was written in Latin. The large Catechism is designed for clergy. We also discussed the newer version of the Lord's Prayer which we are saying now. This is actually 50 years old.

Minutes from April 14 th were reviewed and approved.

Pastors Report: Pastor Matt gave a summary of his written report.

Pastor will be on vacation for the following Sundays: May 25 th Joint service at Hope with Richard Nelson. July 6 th Joint service at Grace Rejoice Choir. September 14 th Rejoice Choir. November 9th and 16th Richard Nelson. Motion was made by Mark Krider to not have a Council Meeting in July. This was seconded by Maelynn. Motion passed and we will not have a July meeting.

Treasurers Report: Deena was absent but had made copies of the April's treasurer report for everyone to review, Joe covered the outline she left. The report was approved subject to audit.

Old Business:

A) Knights of Columbus. Joe read a letter from Keith Darstein on the blood drive that was held at Grace Church on May 4 th . The drive went really well and collected 23 pints of blood.

New Business:

A) Parish Nurse Beth Moss. Covered above.

B) Confirmation Class: A lot of ideas were shared on how long the class should be, at what age should they start and what are the expectations. Paul, Maelynn, Morgan and Linda will meet and bring this to the August meeting so we can kick this off with the new school year.

C) First Fridays: Council liked the idea of renting a space downtown for First Fridays. Joe will check on availability and fill out the reservation form. Linda is checking on pricing for helium and balloons. Joe, Bill and Morgan will design a pamphlet to attach to the balloons. Some ideas for the pamphlet (Noodle Dinner, Scouts, Men's Breakfast, Food Pantry, Pre School). We will also need volunteers from 6pm to 9pm to staff the tent.

Team Reports:

Property- Mark gave a summary of his written report. The parking lot will be closed from May 23 rd to the 26 th for sealing, depending on weather. The speaker on the left side of the parish is all distorted when the Rejoice Choir sings. This is a continual issue, and we will have to call in a professional to look at it. A new electrical circuit was installed for the fish tank in Preschool. A list of other items completed is on the Property Team's list.

Food Pantry- Joe gave a summary of Dave's written report. New guidelines regarding the client voucher program are coming that will affect some of our clients. Dave is covering the changes with them. We need more volunteers to help in

Food pantry on Wednesday or Friday afternoon from 12 to 2. Joe will write a newsletter article to see if anyone is interested. Joe also gave an update on Bread Loaf offering, last month we collected \$368.99 for the synod disaster relief fund.

Fellowship- Mark, The Old Settlers Day Noodle dinner is June 19 th from 11-2 and 4-7. Online the web page only shows 11-2. Joe will contact them to add 4-7. Mark is getting volunteer sheets ready and Joe will cover during announcements on May 18 th before service and at Hope on May 25 th before service. Morgan is looking into advertising for the event (Facebook, Radio, Paper).

Worship and Music-Nothing to report

Christian Education- Linda gave a summary of her Sunday School thoughts and ideas. The group she has is very small but the few that she has really enjoys it. She also thanked Branson for taking the children out during Pastors sermon and covering a lesson with them.

Stewardship- Linda Nothing new yet but she will be doing a temple talk on June 1rst.

Permanent Endowment- Paul The group met last month and are looking at changing the amount that is given out according to the guidelines. Currently we are giving out 8, \$1,000 scholarships. We are looking at giving out 6, \$2,000 scholarships. Next meeting will be June 25 th . Members of the group are Brad, Penny, Janet, Morgan, Mike, Pastor Matt and Paul as the council secretary. Also, they are possibly pulling the grant money from Thrivent and putting it at Chase Bank.

Altar Guild- Maelynn We are running low on attendance books; Pastor will order more.

Staff Support- Pastor Matt Reviews will be coming this summer.

Preschool- Council reviewed Kirsten's written report.

Meeting adjourned at 8:22 pm with the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer Request

If someone you know needs some extra prayers through a hard time or sickness, please email the office at Prayers.gracelutheran@gmail.com

Or you can call someone on the Care Team:

Jane Straub: 260-229-1118

Linda Trowbridge 260-229-1815

Linda Grawcock 260-609-5037

Ann Wolfe 260-609-5920

Sandy Whiteleather 260-503-4281

Join us for fellowship hour immediately following the service.

THANK YOU

to all the wonderful people who donated their time and yummy treats each week!!!

Important Email addresses

Church business and bulletin items:

Office.gracelutheran@gmail.com

Newsletter articles (due by the 21th of the month):

Newsletter.gracelutheran@gmail.com

Prayer Chain requests: prayers.gracelutheran@gmail.com

Food Pantry needs this month : Cereal

Also food pantry needs Plastic bags (Walmart, Kroger's, ect) and Egg cartons.

Purpose statement: Empowered by Jesus to participate in God's work with our community.

Guiding Principles:

- Always growing Relationships with God, one another, and the world
- God is at work in the world and we get to participate
- Trusting that God equips us, we understand and serve the needs of our community and world
- Music and worship are expressions of the Holy Spirit in this place.
- Each one has something to contribute
- All are on a journey, still traveling and searching
- We can walk arm in arm without seeing eye to eye

Troop 84

Both girls and boys were apart of the Flag day Ceremony put on by the Elks of Whitley county. Troop 84 G and B helped with the OSD Noodle Dinner .They also walked in the Old Settlers Day Parade.

Pack 3082 also helped with the Flag Ceremony, and walked in the old Settlers Day Parade. Pack 3082 also helped at the OSD Noodle Dinner.









Following the meal, Ann Wolfe led the Business portion of the meeting. The July 15 th gathering will be hosted by Grace and the Girl Scouts will be represented by Wendy Ressler. Members are to bring items for the box located at the back, outside of the church.

Other things discussed were the Health Kits, Free the Girls donations, quilts and the rescheduled Retreat at Lutherwald. Helping Hands now meets on Mondays. If interested check with Karen Nelson or Jo Krider.

The Executive Director of the Mustard Seed, Sarah, was our special guest. The Mustard Seed serves 7 counties and works with 151 agencies providing everything from " a can opener to a couch." They have provided 562 kids with beds and served 1500 individuals. 3,000 children in Fort Wayne experience homelessness. Just last year they served 462 families. The many kitchen items brought by the ladies were sent with Sarah.

The next meeting will be July 15, 2025. Until then keep COOL!!





OSD NODDLE DINNER- It went well. Sold over 200 Plates.

Thank you to everyone that helped make this possible.



Check out the new and revamped Nursey.





First Friday's

Grace Lutheran Church is participating in First Fridays this year. This is a great opportunity for us to share what we are great at. Two things we do the best at is our Preschool and Food Pantry. These were our speaking points as we handed out helium balloons to the young kids. We had a great time and met a lot of new faces in the community. We need a few volunteers to help each month. If you would like to participate, please see one of the members on church council. I would like to thank Bill, Linda, Maelynn, Branson and Morgan for helping me at our first outing. The first Friday dates are July 4, August 1, September 5, October 3.

Thank You,

Joe Freiburger



It's that time of year again to sign up for the Pork Chop Lunch at the 4-H fair. Grace will be helping again this year. The lunch is Sunday, July 13. There are 2 shifts: 10:45-2 (the busy shift) and 2-4 (the more relaxed shift). There are a variety of jobs available: serving line, serving pies or drinks, carry out area, kitchen duties, and more. Please call or text Alison Oelschlager at 260-609-7894 if you are able to help out, or if you have any questions. THANK YOU!

1st Sunday-Sunday School
1st Sunday - BP checks
2nd Sunday- Confirmation
3rd Sunday- Sunday school
4th Sunday- Adult Sunday school



July Birthdays

| LINVILL, Maeve BRUBAKER, Aidan HOCKERMAN, Kathy ABRELL, Stephanie DARSTEIN, Keith HEUER, Abigail ALT, Lena HEUER, Lori HART, Deena SMITH, Landon HARTER, Dorian SMITH, Charles DRIVER, Lena MARKEN, Audra MYERS, Eric ROTHGEB, Olivia HOCKERMAN, Kaitlyn GAFF, Susan GREEN, Tara | 07/01 07/02 07/03 07/04 07/04 07/06 07/13 07/15 07/15 07/15 07/15 07/16 07/19 07/21 07/21 07/24 07/24 07/25 07/26 07/27 |
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| | |
| SCOTT, Brian BAATZ, Leroy | 07/28 07/30 |
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Jul 2025 (Eastern Time - New York)

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church Christian Holidays, Holidays in United States

Worship At Hope Sundays at 8:15am Worship with Holy Communion at Grace Sundays at 10am

LIVE on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/gracelutherancolumbiacity

Upcoming Important dates...

July 6th Combine @ Grace @ 10 am